

September 17, 2014

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith:

We write to express our strong support for Congressional authorization of the provision of assistance and training to properly vetted members of the Syrian opposition.

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) is simultaneously fighting both the murderous regime of Bashar al-Assad and the barbaric Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Providing greater assistance to FSA is the United States' best opportunity to develop a moderate force that is capable of defeating ISIS and bringing about a post-Assad Syria that is free of terror.

As you may know, FSA forces have recently achieved some successes on the ground against ISIS forces in northern Syria, but their effectiveness is limited by their lack of sufficient assistance and training.

Building up the moderate opposition in Syria will be a key element of any successful strategy against ISIS. To be sure, after three years of war, it will take a long time to build the moderate opposition. But there is no viable alternative. The United States must set to this task immediately.

Finally, we note that approval of this measure should not prevent or circumscribe Congress from considering a properly scoped authorization for the use of military force in the future, or from otherwise revisiting or revising its position on this issue as conditions on the ground evolve. But time is of the essence, and we are convinced of the urgent need for Congress to authorize this effort.

Sincerely,

Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker

Ambassador Robert S. Ford

General Jack M. Keane, USA, Retired

General David H. Petraeus, USA, Retired